

21 February 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Training

FROM : [REDACTED] OTR/IS/OBF

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SUBJECT : Report on Inauguration of
New Vietnam Area Course1. Introduction

I shall preface this report on the first running of the Vietnam Area Course (VAC) with a brief account of its development and its relation to other training on Vietnam.

2. History

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The Vietnam Area Course had its genesis late in 1966 in a "felt need" on the part of Mr. [REDACTED] Chief of Vietnam Operations (VNO) for an area course on North Vietnam. This need was formally communicated by him to the Office of Training in a memorandum of 3 April 1967, and I was then authorized to undertake the assignment. A program was scheduled for 10 July 1967, but this was postponed by VNO because of the physical dispersion of the student body for whom the course was being organized. Informal conversations with Mr. [REDACTED] produced a rethinking of the course, and on 19 September 1967 this was embodied in a request from FE Division for a one-week area course on Vietnam, South as well as North. The first running of the course was scheduled for 11-15 December 1967, but this was subsequently changed to 15-19 January 1968, and VAC was then first launched.

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3. Relation to Other Programs on Vietnam

This is one of three programs on Vietnam for which I have whole or partial responsibility. The other two are the Vietnam Station Orientation (VSO), and the Vietnam Paramilitary Orientation (VPO). Each program stands by itself, but they are

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scheduled to run as a unit. This unit is required training for all personnel assigned PCS to Vietnam Station with the large exception of those persons slated to be Operations or Plans officers in Revolutionary Development (RDC/O and RDC/P). These programs are more fully described in the special OTR bulletins attached to this Memorandum.

4. The First Running of the VAC

This first installment of the VAC took place 15-19 January 1968, in Room 1-A-13, with an enrollment of 36 persons. The inauguration proceeded smoothly even though the following changes had to be made: illness kept [redacted] and [redacted] from appearing, and they were replaced by [redacted] and [redacted] VAS, press or business made me replace State's Mr. Richard Smyser with OCI's Mr. Charles [redacted] and I'm not sure what accounted for Mr. [redacted]

5. Class Composition

Unlike the original Vietnam Orientation, the VAC enrollment is open to "headquarters" types" as well as those preparing for assignment in Vietnam; this class had 12 of the former and 24 of the latter. Headquarters personnel came from 8 different offices in the 4 directorates. There were 4 females. As for age, they ranged from 24 to 58, and this range was marked by as great a diversity in age categories, namely, 22.

6. Speakers

Also unlike the Vietnam Orientation, the VAC featured as speakers non-government experts on Vietnam as well as Agency and U.S. Government personnel. Of the 15 speakers used, 3 came from universities, 2 from the Department of State, and 10 from our own ranks; this last figure included 2 replacements for the absent outsiders noted in Para. 4. The 3 private citizens were Drs. Kenneth [redacted]

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were paid \$50 each and [REDACTED] received \$85. All the contractual arrangements were handled by me through FE Division and without any difficulty. The caliber of speakers was very high, though some criticisms will be noted in Para. 7 below, and was understandably the main reason for the unanimously favorable reaction of the class, also noted in Para. 7, to this initial running of the VAC.

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7. Critiques

Attached is a copy of the critique devised for this program; 35 of the 36 enrollees completed the form.

Without exception, the first question, Was this worthwhile?, was answered affirmatively by all. The nearest thing to a dissent was one "Generally Yes;" otherwise the answers were "decidedly yes," "very much so," "definitely yes," and several longer statements of the same theme. Certainly my own hourly and daily reading of class reaction confirms the written record.

The fourth question specifically solicited "disappointments" with any particular speaker's presentation; and while the general answer was favorable, there were 18 critiques which had some mildly adverse comment on either individuals by name or their subject. These were directed at 9 persons:

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[REDACTED] were each mentioned only once and these notices can be dismissed as insignificant; [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] each received 4 shares, and [REDACTED] took bottom honors with 5. These criticisms, not all of which were justified in my opinion, are useful to me in my discussions with the speakers about their presentations. Of course there were also favorable comments: for [REDACTED] all of whom are very effective.

"What subject would you like to have had covered that was not covered?" (Question No. 5). Unfortunately, but naturally enough, many persons said "What the Agency is doing in Vietnam." I say "unfortunately", because this course was not designed

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to cover that point; and yet it is quite obvious to me now that the subject must be given some formal treatment in the next running, and this must be accomplished without doing injury to the structure of the Vietnam Station Orientation, where the subject more properly belongs.

8. Substance of the Course

Despite the favorable reception of this course, much remains to be done to make it a balanced and comprehensive study - if that is possible in one week! - of the physical, societal and cultural framework of Vietnam within which the U.S. and this Agency must operate. What is especially still needed to offset the inevitable concentration of speakers and student alike on current and future political and military events is sophisticated treatment of Vietnam from the perspective of economics, anthropology and sociology. Without more of this disciplinary approach, this course might turn out to be a "current events" class rather than an area study, the presupposition to an understanding of the contemporary scene. The problem is basically the availability not only of qualified and articulate people in and out of the Agency but also of those people who can be cleared for our use.

9. Conclusion

This triad of programs on Vietnam (VAC, VSO and VPO) has now had its first running; and from where I sit, it seems to have run sensibly and smoothly, and so it should continue to run.

For those men who take all three portions there seems to be an added and significant dividend in the form of a morale factor. These men, entering a new division and coming together as strangers, are sharing three weeks of learning, talk, and jesting about Vietnam, the Agency, and themselves. They leave less as strangers and more as acquaintances and friends bound for a common, serious and memorable experience.

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